



Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

# News Release

Communications Division

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## CONSUMER ALERT: TAX DEFERRALS ARE FREE TO FILE

Austin, TX - With the deadline for local property tax payment just passed, the tax office is now hearing from those, including the elderly and disabled, who cannot pay taxes. Section 33.06 of the Texas Property Tax Code provides the tax deferral as a remedy for those who live in their homestead residence, and are at least 65 years old or disabled. Tax deferrals, like exemptions, **cost nothing to file** and provide the owner with assurance that taxes can be deferred for payment at a future date.

"Property owners may start seeing advertisements or direct mailers from companies offering to file property tax deferrals for a fee," says Tax Assessor-Collector Bruce Elfant. "We encourage customers to call our office for assistance because we can provide everything they need for free."

Tax deferrals are not for everyone but they serve an important purpose to those qualified homeowners who need relief from paying taxes. To participate in this program, the property owner files an application for a deferral at the tax office or the appraisal district office. Upon approval, tax payment is deferred with no penalty and interest at only 8 percent per year. That amount is far below the usual penalty and interest that starts at 7 percent in February and reaches a high of 24 percent in 12 months. Placing a deferral on the property allows the owner to avoid immediate tax payment; however, there are important aspects to keep in mind.

"When the owner sells the property or it passes to the heirs, all taxes, plus 8 percent interest, must be paid in full within 180 days or the regular penalty and interest will be applied," says Tax Assessor-Collector Bruce Elfant. "Six months is a relatively short period for settling an estate, therefore, it is strongly recommended that owners advise their heirs of a deferral so they can prepare."

Those who are considering a deferral and have a lienholder should check with the mortgage company regarding their policies on deferrals. Finally, a qualified property owner may file a deferral as a backup, in case it's needed and continue to pay taxes.

Contact the tax office at [www.traviscountytax.org](http://www.traviscountytax.org) or (512) 854-9473 for assistance.

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